



# **Which Skills Do Workplace Learning/ eLearning Practitioners Need?**

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Research shows that many jobs and job skills are in flux. This report shows that changeable job skills seems to be true for learning/eLearning jobs as well.

The purpose of this survey was to analyze which skills and tasks are most often used by respondents working in the learning/eLearning field. We asked eight questions. Five were forced-choice and three were open-ended. We show how respondents from 105 countries answered these questions.

Our analysis of 1668 total responses showed that respondents called on specific skills/tasks more than others. It also shows that respondents call on a diverse skill/task set. We expected this result as open-ended answers described how difficult it is to keep up with the diversity of skills needed to work as a learning/eLearning practitioner. Other research shows skills in many jobs are unstable, meaning that learning new skills on a regular basis is the norm. We saw evidence of this for learning/eLearning practitioners in survey answers.

Respondents also showed a diverse set of skills/tasks they needed to obtain or improve in the next twelve months. Their answers showed that at many respondents see the critical need to produce tangible and needed results.

We hope to repeat this survey in the future to analyze changes.

# Introduction

The reason for this survey was to better understand the skills that learning/eLearning practitioners have and need today. The World Economic Forum (WEF) research on work and job skills points to a clear and accelerating pace of global change and its disruptions to organizations and industries. Because organizations must adapt to survive, these changes impact work, jobs, and skills.

Some jobs are disappearing, including jobs such as parking attendant and secretary. Much of their work has been taken over by technology solutions and applications. There are new jobs that didn't exist ten years ago, including jobs such as cloud engineer and drone operator. Like many new jobs, they were created because of the need to work with technological leaps. And even more stable jobs, such as electrician and accountant, no longer have stable skills. For example, electricians now need technical skills to work with technology-driven systems. CPAs use sophisticated technical systems, which changes their skill needs. Research says we can expect these skills changes to continue to accelerate.

Manpower performed recent research with more than 42,000 employers and found 40% are experiencing talent shortages. Critical skills may be unavailable, causing operational problems. Indeed, we are seeing organizational longevity at an all-time low. In the face of so much change, organizational survival is anything but assured.

These changes affect learning/eLearning work and skills. It is no longer adequate to train people for static skills. Workplace learning/eLearning practitioners must help people prepare to update and change job skills as part of growing expertise and remaining employable.

Organizations often need to build needed skills from within, according to the Manpower research. This requires a radically different approach to training and performance interventions than in the past, making the support of skill and expertise building ever more critical.

The rationale for this survey was to discover a baseline of job skills used by workplace learning/eLearning practitioners today. In addition, it is important to understand the variability of L&D skills and what L&D practitioners see as needed skills. Over time, we can repeat the survey to analyze the ways in which the L&D skillset is changing.

eLearning Industry solicited responses to an eight-question online survey from 1/17/2018 to 2/5/2018. Five of the questions were fixed-choice and three were open-ended. The survey received input from 2017 respondents from 105 countries.

Out of 2017 respondents, 349 were disqualified due to not working primarily in the learning/eLearning field.

As a result, the number of total number of respondents for the survey was 1,668.

### Which Skills Do Workplace Learning/eLearning Practitioners Need Today?

2. **Organization type:** What type of organization do you work for? If you work in more than one of these types of organizations, select the one you consider to be your **primary** work. \*

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Nonprofit
- ☐ Education K-12
- ☐ Education Higher education
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Unemployed (e.g., student, retired, home provider, other)

3. **Location:** What country do you work in? \*

-- Please Select --

4. **Primary focus:** Which of the following skills/tasks do you perform **most frequently** in your current work? Please select what you actually do rather than what you think you should do. **Select no more than 5.** \*

#### Analysis/M Measurement

- ☐ Analyze training needs and suggest solutions
- ☐ Analyze performance needs or problems and suggest solutions
- ☐ Monitor and evaluate results

#### Project Management

- ☐ Manage clients/stakeholders
- ☐ Manage projects/programs

#### Tools

- ☐ Select/implement/connect/manage tools and technologies (e.g., collaboration tools, LMS, LCMS)
- ☐ Help people solve tools/technologies problems

#### Content

- ☐ Design instruction
- ☐ Create asynchronous training
- ☐ Create synchronous training
- ☐ Create classroom training
- ☐ Create performance support
- ☐ Create media: animations
- ☐ Create media: graphics
- ☐ Create media: video

#### Delivery

- ☐ Deliver asynchronous training (e.g., provide feedback on activities, answer questions)
- ☐ Deliver synchronous training (e.g., facilitate sessions, answer questions, provide feedback)
- ☐ Deliver classroom training
- ☐ Support or coach workers

#### Management

- ☐ Manage budgets/resources
- ☐ Hire/supervise/manage people

#### Administrative

- ☐ Perform administrative tasks (e.g., scheduling classes, setting up equipment, coordinating enrollment, etc.)

#### HR

- ☐ Create/communicate career plans
- ☐ Perform HR functions



# Survey Results

This section shows the results of each question in the survey.

## Question 1: Primary Job

### Is your primary job managing, delivering, creating, supporting, or evaluating learning/eLearning?

We wanted to make sure that the survey results reflected the jobs of workplace learning/eLearning practitioners. We used question 1, therefore, as a qualifier for the survey. Only those who selected “Yes” received the remaining survey questions. Table 1 shows the breakdown of answers.

Table 1. Primary job is learning/eLearning

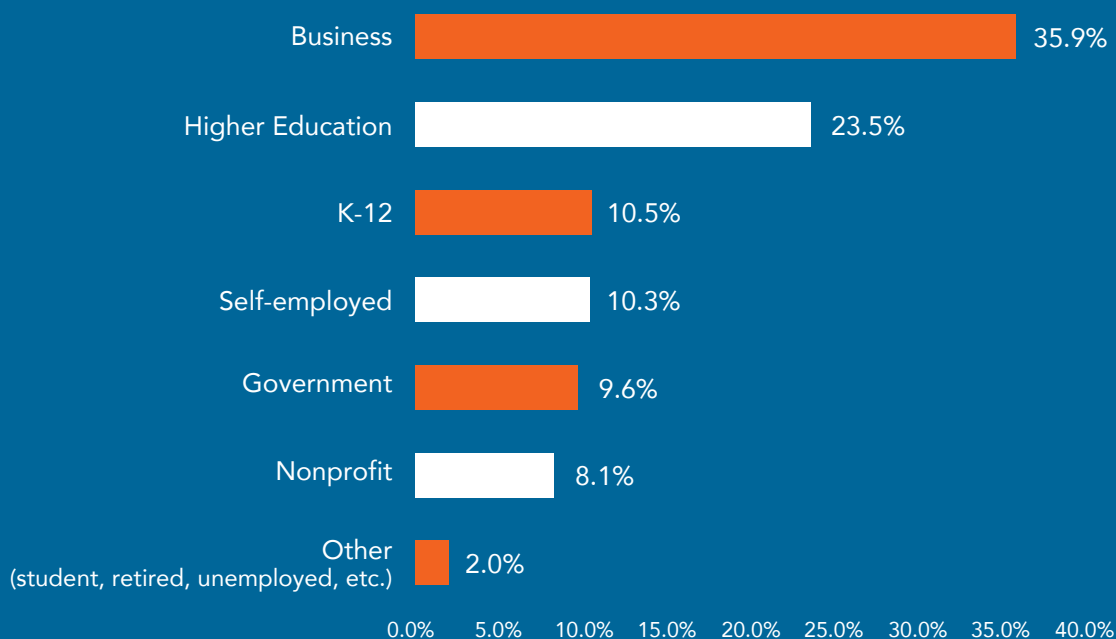
Answer	Percent	Number
Yes	82.7%	1,668
No	17.3%	349

## Question 2: Organization Type

### What type of organization do you work for?

To be able to filter the skills questions by type of organization, we asked respondents what type of organization they worked for. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of answers.

Figure 1. Type of organization





## Question 3: Country

### In what country do you work?

To find out the location of respondents (and better understand which countries the data represented), we asked respondents to select the country they worked in. Table 2 lists the countries that had greater than or equal to 5% of respondents.

**Table 2. Respondents' countries that make up  $\geq 5\%$  of responses**

Country	Percent	Number
United States	38.2%	398
India	8.0%	83
Canada	6.2%	65
United Kingdom	5.9%	62
Australia	5.1%	53

The countries in Table 2 make up 63.4% of the respondents. Respondents from countries other than those shown in Table 2 make up 38.2% of the respondents. (Rounding allows the percentages to add up to more than 100%.) The survey had responses from 105 countries. Although only five countries are shown in Table 2, the answers from all qualified respondents are shown in the question responses.

Approximately 55% of the responses were from North America and other English-speaking countries. As a result, we may want to view the results as more reflective of North American and English-speaking countries.



## Question 4: Primary Focus

**Which of the following are the skills/tasks that you perform most frequently in your current work? Select no more than 5.**

Question 4 asked people to select up to five skills/tasks that *make up the bulk of their work*. We show the list of skills/tasks from which respondents could choose in the sidebar.

The following lists skills/tasks from which respondents made their selections in Question 4 and Question 5.

### Analysis/M Measurement

- Analyze training needs and suggest solutions
- Analyze performance needs or problems and suggest solutions
- Monitor and evaluate results

### Project Management

- Manage clients/stakeholders
- Manage project/programs

### Tools

- Select/implement/connect/manage tools and technologies (e.g. collaboration tools, LMS, help systems)
- Help people solve tools/technologies problems

## Question 4: Primary Focus

### Content

- Design instruction
- Create asynchronous training
- Create synchronous training
- Create classroom training
- Create performance support
- Create media: graphics
- Create media: animations
- Create media: video

### Delivery

- Deliver synchronous training (provide feedback on activities, answer questions)
- Deliver asynchronous training
- Deliver classroom training
- Coach or support workers

### Management

- Manage budgets/resources
- Hire/supervise/manage people

### Administrative

- Perform administrative tasks (e.g., scheduling classes, setting up equipment, coordinating enrollment, etc.)

### HR

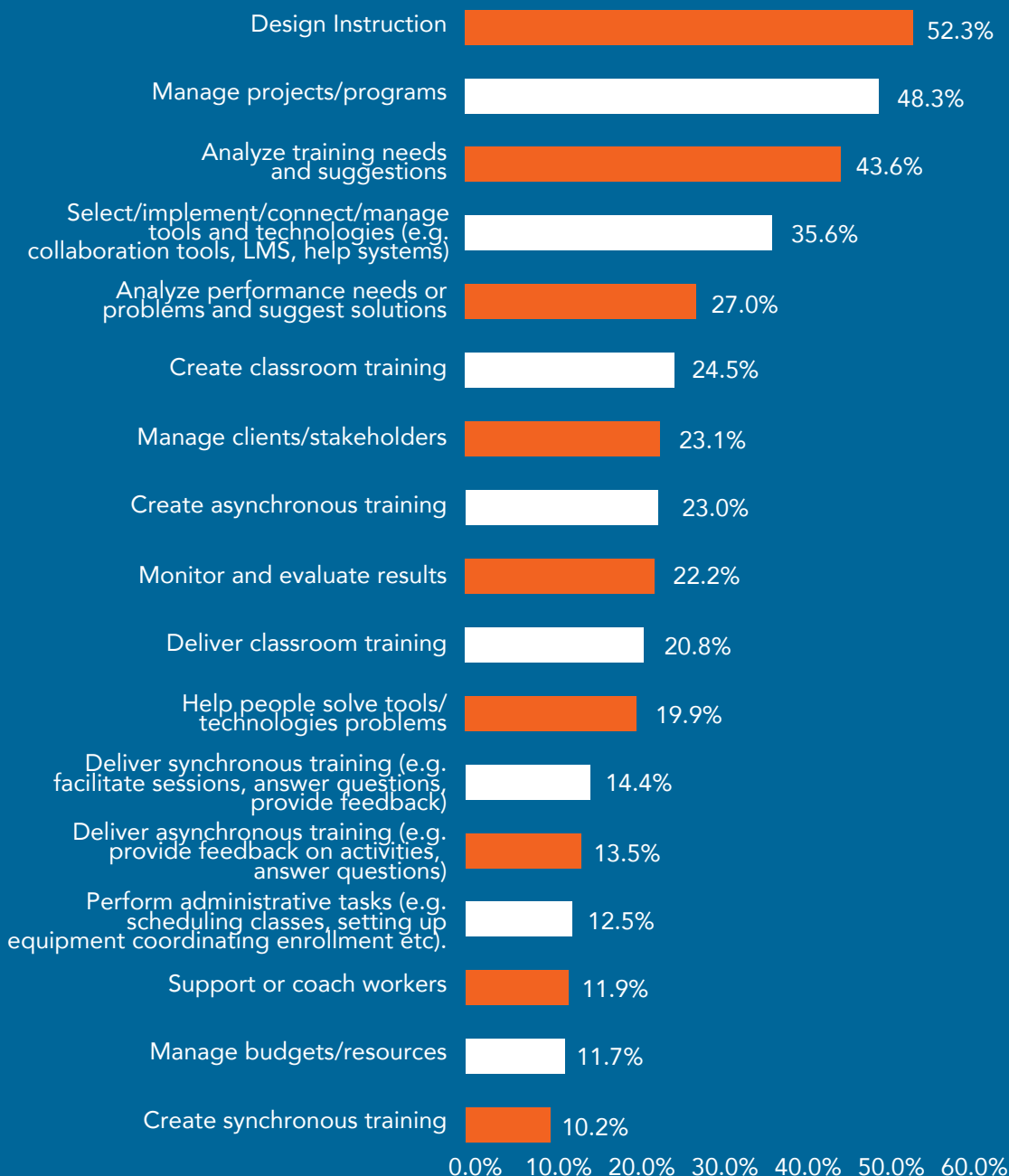
- Create/communicate career plans
- Perform HR functions

## Question 4: Primary Focus

Figure 2 shows skills/tasks that received at least 10% of the responses.

**Figure 2. Work skills/tasks selected by  $\geq 10\%$  of respondents**

**Which of the following are the skills/tasks that you perform most frequently in your current work? Select no more than 5.**

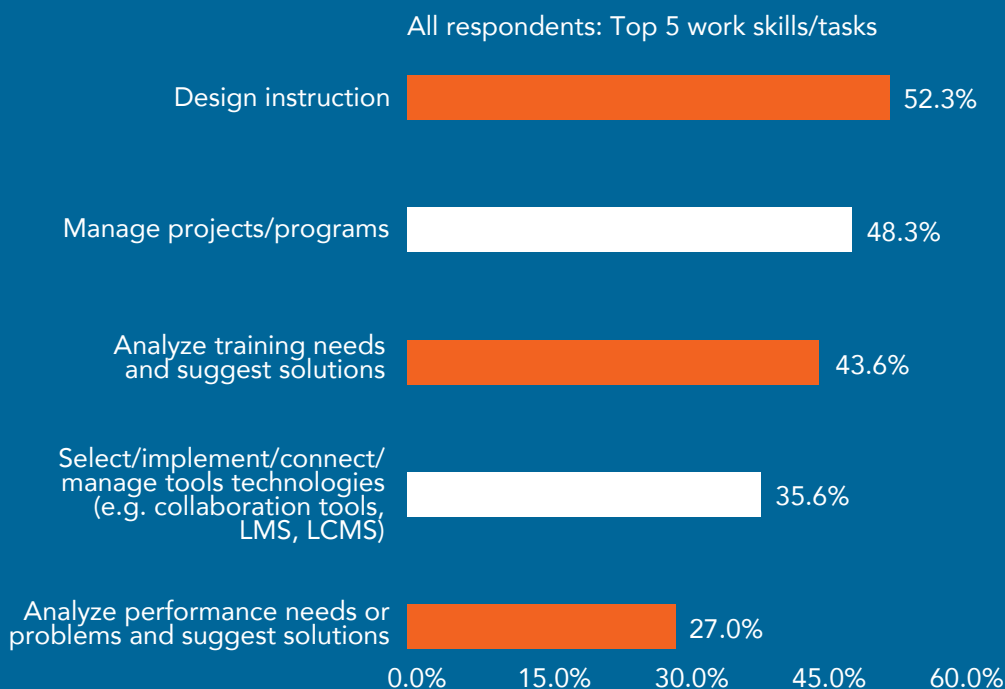


## Question 4: Primary Focus

We also wanted to analyze how varied respondents' jobs are, as this helps us understand the diversity of skills/tasks. I used a variation ratio to calculate how wide the skillset of respondents is. The calculated variation ratio gives us a percentage from 0 (0%) to 1 (100%). When the variation ratio is small (closer to 0), it indicates the data is more similar. When the variation ratio is large (closer to 1), it indicates the data is diverse and more varied. The variation ratio for Question 4 is .89 (closer to 1). This tells us that the answers to Question 4 are quite diverse.

Figure 3 shows the **top five** work skills/tasks selected by all respondents.

**Figure 3. Top 5 work skills/tasks**

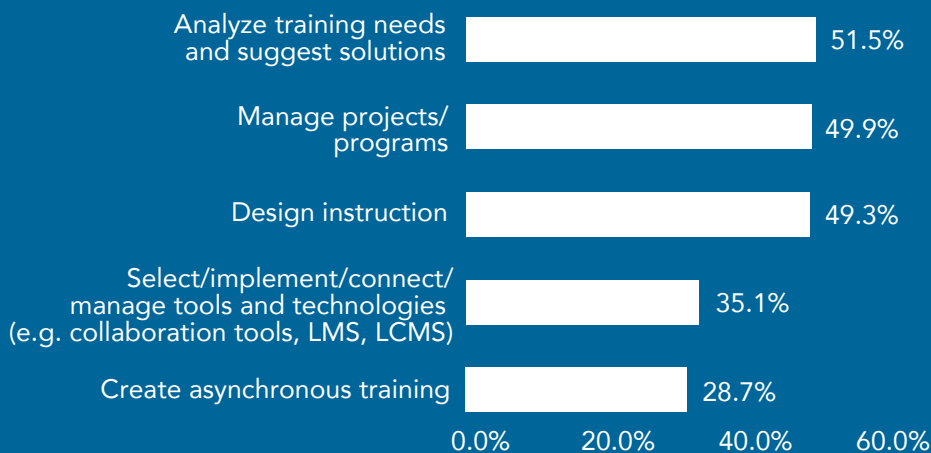


## Question 4: Primary Focus

We wanted to find out if different types of organizations have different top 5s. Figure 4 through Figure 6 shows the top 5 answers chosen by respondents working in business, government/nonprofit, and education/higher education. Figure 7 shows the top 5 answers of respondents who said they are self-employed.

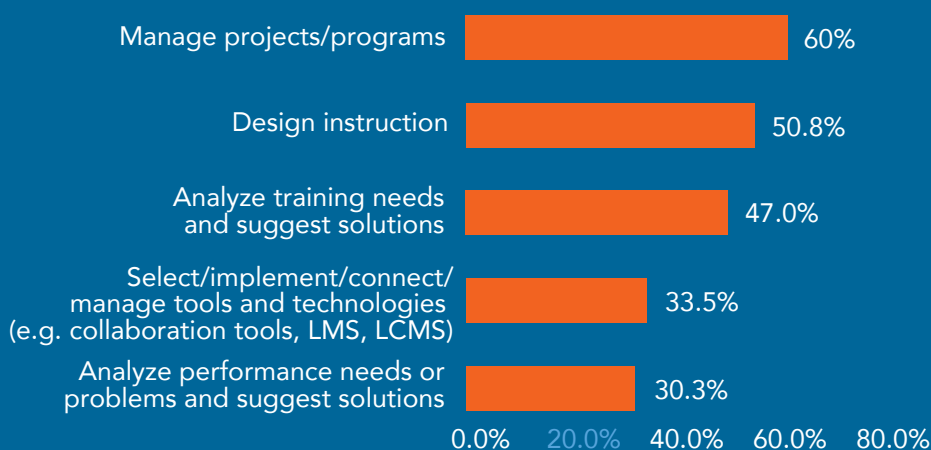
**Figure 4. Top 5 work skills/tasks-Business**

### BUSINESS: Top 5 skills/tasks



**Figure 5. Top 5 work skills/tasks-Government and Nonprofit**

### GOVERNMENT AND NONPROFIT: Top 5 skills/tasks



## Question 4: Primary Focus

Figure 6. Top 5 work skills/tasks-Education and Higher Education

### EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION: Top 5 skills/tasks

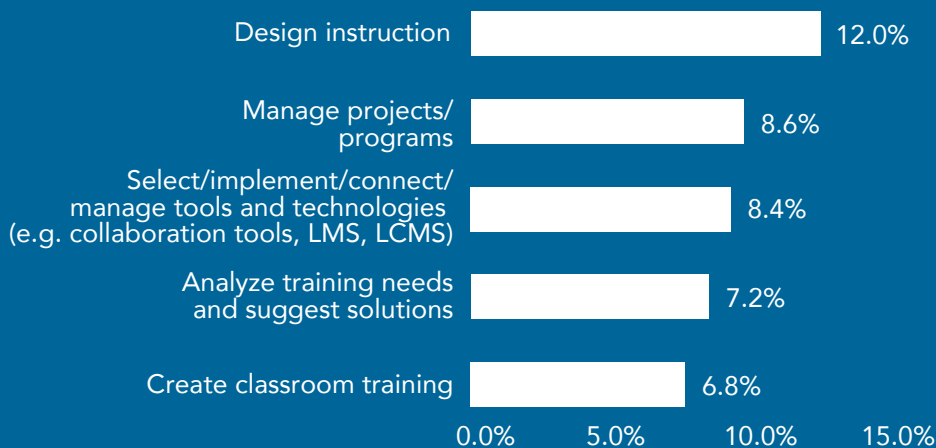
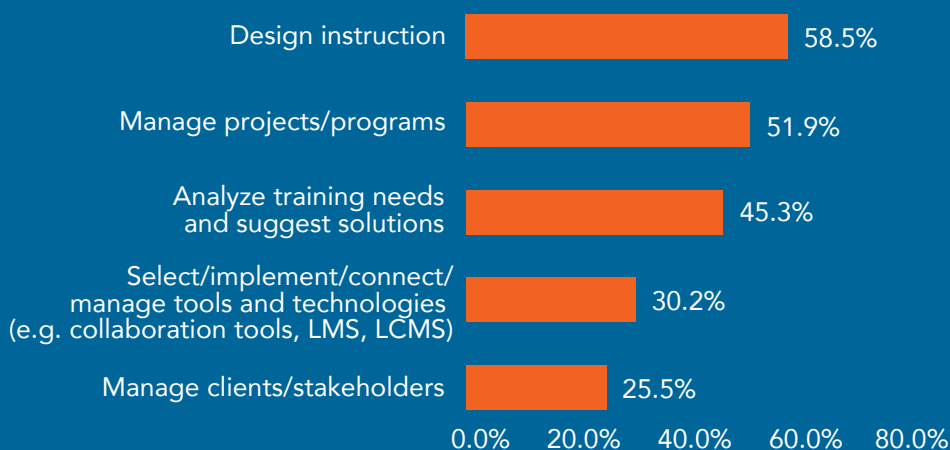


Figure 7. Top 5 work skills/tasks-Self-employed

### SELF-EMPLOYED: Top 5 skills/tasks



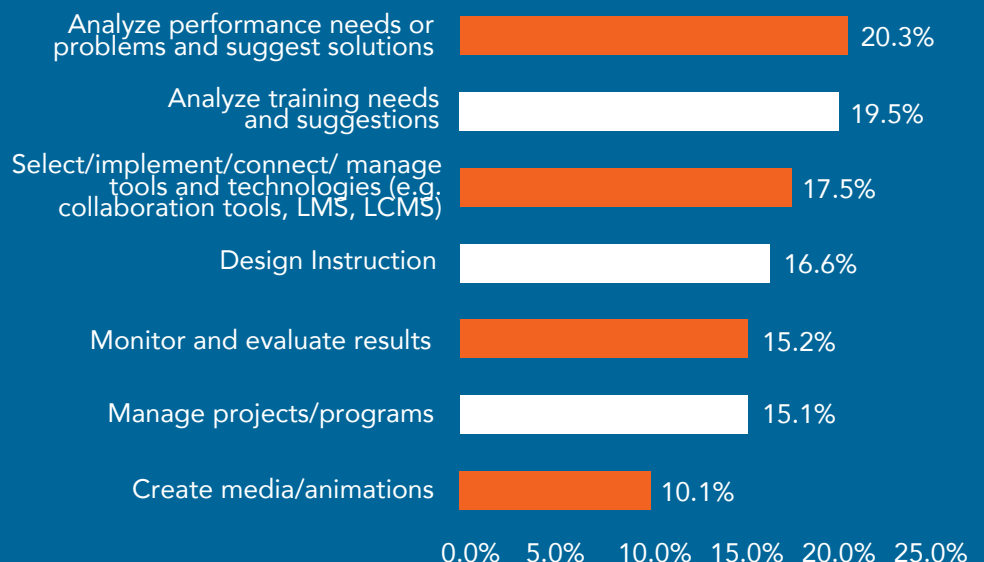
## Question 5: Needed Skills

**Which of these skills/tasks do you most need to learn or improve in the next 12 months? Select no more than 2.**

Question 5 asked people to select up to two skills/tasks that they need to learn or improve in the coming 12 months. The list of skills/tasks was the same as for Question 4. Figure 8 shows the answers selected by at least 10% of the respondents.

**Figure 8. Most needed skills/tasks to learn or improve selected by ≥ 10% of respondents**

**Needed skills: Which of these skills/tasks do you need to learn or improve in the next 12 months? Select no more than 2.**



The variation ratio for Question 5 was calculated at .89 (closer to 1). The answers to Question 5 are also quite diverse. In addition, it is interesting to note that the three skills in the Analysis/Masurement category appeared in top five answers.

**Which specific skills do you need to learn in the next 12 months (e.g. learn to use [specific] authoring tool, write better assessment questions, etc.)?**

### Figure 9. Specific skills word cloud





## Question 6: Specific Skills

Here are snippets from actual remarks related to some of the more commonly used words.

### Tools, Technologies

Authoring tool(s)

VR/AR

xAPI

Next generation LMS

### Media

Video and audio editing

How to gamify courses/learning

Whiteboard animation

### Design

Needs analysis

Write better training manuals/quick reference guides

Photoshop

Scenarios

Gamify courses/learning

Learning experience design

### Assessment

Better evaluation of processes and results

Write better assessment questions

Establish goals and monitor and evaluate quantifiable results

Scenario assessments

Metrics and how to evaluate

### Management

Project management

Building reports for company

## Question 7: Learning Methods

### How do you plan to learn/improve the skills listed in Q6?

This open-ended question asked respondents to input freeform text answers. The resulting word cloud for commonly used words is shown in Figure 10. The larger the word in the cloud, the more frequently the word was mentioned.

Figure 10. Specific skills word cloud



The answers to Question 7 showed a wide range of electronic and non-electronic methods. Learning research points to a growing need for self-direction in workplace learning to keep up with the need for new and changing skills. This is an opportunity to help that learning/eLearning practitioners can capitalize on.

## Question 8: Comments

### Is there anything else you want to comment on?

This was the last open-ended question, which asked respondents to input freeform text answers about any thoughts they had about the survey or anything else. There were many comments about how adaptable people needed to be to work in this field as the skill needs were regularly changing. Quite a few added comments about not feeling completely confident to do the most critical parts of the job.

Given the issues discussed at the beginning of the report, this outcome is not surprising. And it helps us understand the skill changes most workers need help with.

Several commenters lamented common but problematic practices in workplace learning, including:

- Assuming technology is the answer
- Not employing adequate instructional design
- Too much emphasis on design and delivery; not enough emphasis on supporting people
- Too little analysis
- Not enough emphasis on accessibility, usability, and universal design

The question about primary job skills (Question 4) shows us that respondents have a wide scope of duties. In fact, numerous respondents, in Question 8, input that they were frustrated with question 4 because it only allowed 5 responses. (I wanted people to tell me the skills/tasks that they used the most.) More than a few people said they could have selected all or almost all of the skills/tasks listed.

As discussed in the opening paragraphs of this report, many jobs are changing, and we can see that learning/eLearning jobs are no exception. We might be seeing an acknowledgment of the need to do a far better job at responding real needs rather than simply building training content by the responses to Question 5. The top two skills/tasks selected are:

- Analyze training needs and suggest solutions
- Analyze performance needs or problems and suggest solutions

And the other skill/task under the category Analysis/Measurement also showed up in the top 5

- Monitor and evaluate results

Current skills/tasks are not very different by people who responded from different organization types. In business organizations, the top two skills are Analyze training needs and suggest solutions and Manage project/programs. Designing learning was a close third. Respondents in government and nonprofits and self-employed respondents have the same top three tasks as people working in business but in a different order. People working in educational and higher education environments had the most differences from the other organization types, which is not unexpected.

There is clearly a wide diversity of respondents' primary job skills, as shown in the variation ratio of .89 (the closer the variation ratio is to 1, the more diverse the answers are). In Question 8, one respondent commented,

*"I feel I can't keep up with the technology! It all changes so quickly and so often. Developing new skills and improving existing skills is challenging in a financially constrained business."*

Diversity of skills and the need to do more with less is expected, given the insights shared in the beginning of this report. People in other jobs are undergoing similar changes, and learning/eLearning practitioners can make a greater difference by capitalizing on the need for self-directed learning and supporting expertise.

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# About The Author

Patti Shank, PhD is recognized internationally for her contributions to the L&D field. She is known for evidence-based analysis and design to improve the outcomes from training and performance initiatives. She is the author of *Write and Organize for Deeper Learning and Practice* and *Feedback for Deeper Learning*. During and after her PhD, Patti became involved in multiple L&D research projects to improve training outcomes. She writes regular research-driven articles for eLearning Industry.